



The President's Daily Brief

17 April 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

There are some suggestions that the Communist powers may be moving toward a new initiative for a conference on Indochina. (Page 1)

In Laos, the Communists are becoming more active [redacted] in Cambodia there has been little military activity reported along its border with South Vietnam. (Pages 2 and 3)

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Juan Bosch was upstaged in his return to the Dominican Republic yesterday by the accord reached between President Balaguer and the opposition parties. (Page 4)

Bolivian President Ovando's problems are outlined on Page 5.

Chancellor Brandt and his entourage seem generally well pleased with their talks in Washington. (Page 6)

[redacted] Soviets [redacted]

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In Colombia, it still looks like a close race in the presidential election Sunday. (Page 7)

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INDOCHINA

Soviet Ambassador to the UN Malik appeared to be testing the diplomatic atmosphere in his remarks in New York yesterday. Without saying that the USSR would join with the UK in calling for a Geneva-like conference, Malik noted that the Soviet Union was "paying the closest attention" to the recent French proposal for such a meeting.

This formula jibes with [redacted] Soviet comments that seemed to give the French proposal tacit support. His suggestion that "only a new Geneva conference can bring about a correct solution and a relaxation of tension in the Indochina peninsula," however, appears to carry Moscow beyond its previous public position. It may foreshadow some move to substitute a larger conference for the unproductive Paris talks.

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This more positive Soviet position almost certainly has been coordinated with Hanoi. Moscow has been most reluctant to get too far ahead of the North Vietnamese on questions of this nature. Le Duc Tho has been in the Soviet capital consulting with the Russians for the past six days, and other Vietnamese are due to join him in time for the forthcoming Lenin centennial.

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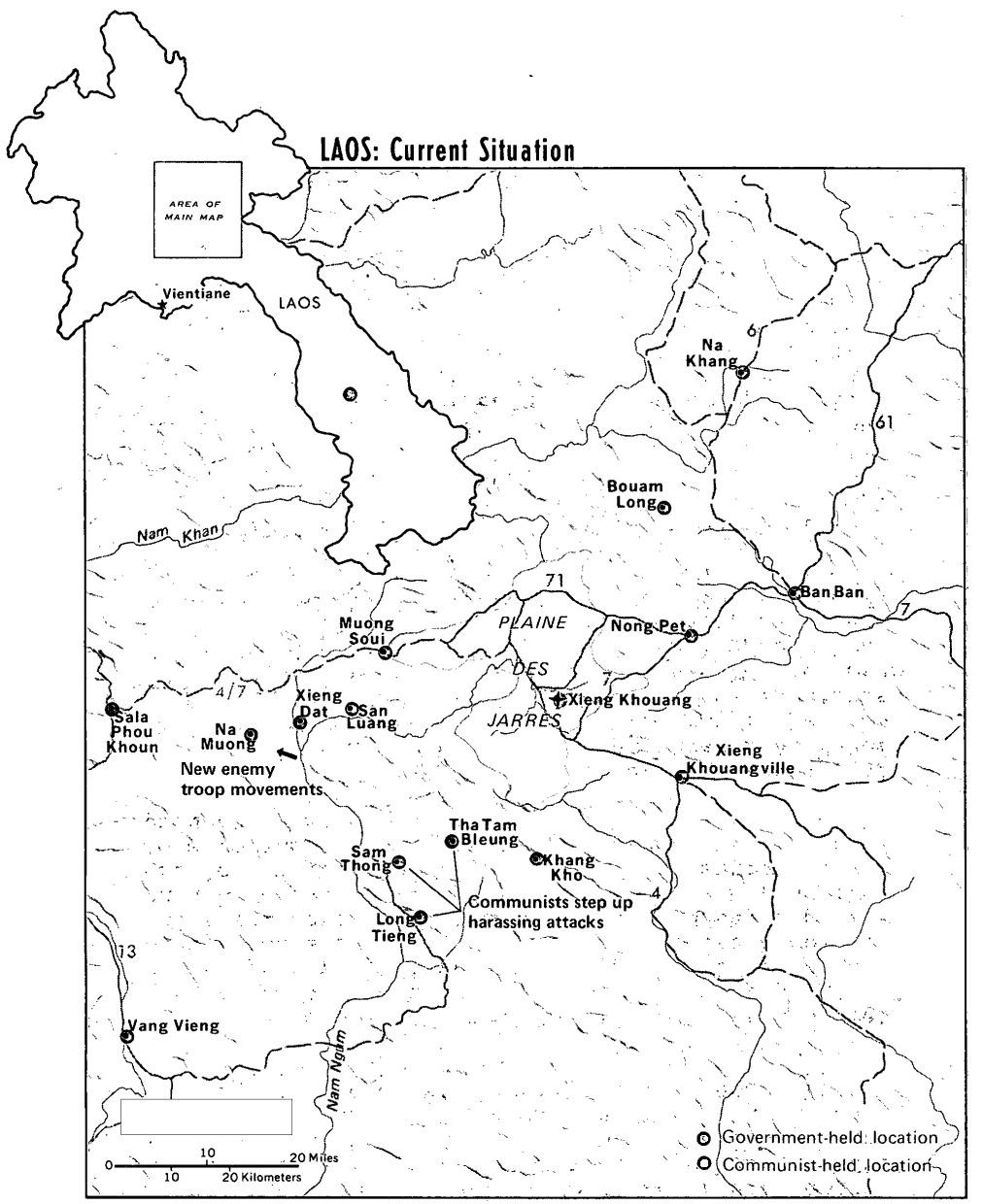
One of these may be Le Duan. [redacted] the party first secretary may be en route to Moscow. Two North Vietnamese aircraft flew to Peking on 14 April.

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[redacted] Chou En-lai met one of the planes and hustled a passenger away in his private car without the usual Chinese arrival fanfare. The passenger could have been Le Duan, but in any case, whoever it was had an opportunity to explore the question of a possible new conference initiative with the Chinese.

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LAOS

Long Tieng came under enemy mortar fire yesterday, forcing a temporary closure of the airstrip. The nearby government base at Sam Thong was also shelled, and one of its supporting outposts was attacked and overrun by North Vietnamese infantrymen. In addition, guerrilla defenders of a position just north of the recently recaptured government base at Tha Tam Bleung beat off a sharp ground attack by a company of enemy regulars.

Vang Pao is not sitting still in the face of this growing North Vietnamese buildup. Plans are under way to saturate the entire sector with company-sized patrols which will have artillery and air support readily available to them.

In the meantime, Communist forces are beginning to operate in larger numbers west of the Plaine des Jarres. Analysis of communications intelligence indicates that as many as two new enemy battalions have moved into the Na Muong area, some 20 miles west of the Plaine and just a few miles south of Route 7. Their presence suggests that the Communists may attempt to drive government forces from this area, possibly as a prelude for a move into the Sala Phou Khoun area, where Routes 7 and 13 intersect.

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CAMBODIA: Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

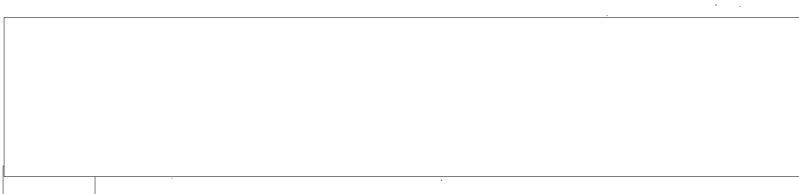
The press reports that several hundred Viet Cong troops attacked the town of Takeo, some 40 miles south of Phnom Penh, yesterday. There is as yet no confirmation, but if the report is true, it would be the first Communist attack on a provincial capital. Otherwise, little activity was reported along the border. Government forces are continuing to withdraw from border positions, and jittery Cambodian officials are reporting some Communist activity deeper inside the country, but so far this is unconfirmed.

Several Vietnamese Communist regiments have filtered across the border into Cambodia recently. This better enables the Communists to defend their base areas from Cambodian harassment or to attack Cambodian border posts. The deepest confirmed penetration has only been about 12 miles, however, suggesting that the Communist posture is still largely defensive.

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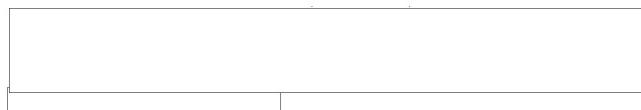


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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Two people are reported to have been killed and several wounded in an incident in Santo Domingo between police and crowds awaiting Juan Bosch's arrival yesterday. Otherwise Bosch's return was unaccompanied by the fireworks some had expected. In fact it was overshadowed by the agreement reached between President Balaguer and the opposition parties ending the latter's threatened boycott of the presidential elections on 16 May.

As part of the accord, Balaguer temporarily resigned last night, as did Vice President Lora. Both men are candidates. President of the Supreme Court Ruiz Tejada, a respected political neutral, will assume provisional control over the government. The agreement permits Balaguer to reassume power on 22 May, by which time the election results presumably will be validated, or at any time in the interim should there be a threat to public order.

Bosch's plans now that he is back are none too clear. He has expressed no interest in public office, and in any event, the deadline for filing is past. His party--the major opposition Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD)--apparently is still planning to abstain from the elections.

What Bosch and the PRD might do is to work toward a tactical alliance supporting another party's candidate. The other parties, however, although willing enough to cash in on PRD support at the polls, are likely to hold Bosch himself at arm's length. They are well aware that Balaguer would like nothing better than associate the opposition in the public's mind with Bosch's extremist image. Balaguer had little trouble defeating Bosch in a two-man race four years ago.

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BOLIVIA

President Ovando will have his hands full in the next few weeks trying to maintain governmental stability in the face of military restlessness and pressures from radical students. His task will be all the more difficult because in many cases he will have to deal with rumors and innuendo rather than with insoluble problems.

The military high command has been swept by rumors of impending changes, and is especially edgy about one that claims that Commander of the Army Miranda, a popular general, is one of 40 top officers to be reassigned. [redacted] notes that, true or not, the currency given this particular rumor, and the adverse reaction to it, have caused considerable loss of confidence in Ovando and may be the beginning of the final rift between the President and the military.

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The military leaders are also concerned about Ovando's apparent permissive attitude toward spreading student disruptions and toward growing labor problems. The government's mild reaction to recent student violence has not placated the student radicals, but it has left the military itching to restore law and order.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY**NOTES**

Romania - Warsaw Pact: [redacted]

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West Germany: Chancellor Brandt and his entourage seem generally well pleased with their talks in Washington. In private conversations with US officials in Bonn, however, Brandt's aides have professed some misgivings over the dialogue on the chancellor's eastern policy. His personal assistant, Wolf-Dietrich Schilling, claims, for instance, that Brandt got the impression the US is being deliberately cautious in its endorsement of ostpolitik and is skeptical of its chances for success. On another matter of prime interest, Brandt is described as being heartened by assurances of our intention to maintain a strong military presence in Europe beyond 1971.

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Colombia: As we noted in The President's Daily Brief of 6 April, the presidential election will be on Sunday. We still expect a photo finish between the government's candidate, lackluster

Misael Pastrana, and [redacted]

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Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. Pastrana appeals to most educated voters, a rather small group in Colombia, and he benefits from the National Front's political machine in rural areas. Rojas Pinilla derives his strength from some elements of the military and police,

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[redacted] and from the poor in the cities, who recall the munificence of his self-aggrandizing public works projects.

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